



KDK ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Heritage Asset Impact Assessment

34 Alexandra Road
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire



Site Data

KDK project code:	333/HHA
County:	Hertfordshire
Village/Town:	Hemel Hempstead
Civil Parish:	Hemel Hempstead
NGR (to 8 figs):	TL 05645 07522
Present use:	Bed and breakfast
Planning proposal:	Block of flats
Local Planning Authority:	Dacorum Borough Council
Planning application ref/date:	4/007949/17/FUL
Date of fieldwork:	28 October 2017
Client:	William Cleeve

Quality Check

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Summary

In October/November 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd prepared a Heritage Asset Assessment of 34 Alexandra Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The Red House, as it is known, is a late Victorian, detached house, located in the original 'New Town' section of Hemel Hempstead. Modern development on the surrounding properties detracts considerably from the heritage value of the site. The proposal preserves elements of the historic design, thereby enhancing the overall setting.

1 Introduction

1.1 In October/November 2017, KDK Archaeology Ltd prepared a Heritage Asset Assessment of 34 Alexandra Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by William Cleeve and was carried out at the request of the Planning Officer, following submission of planning application 4/007949/17/FUL. Following the advice provided to the applicant by tDacorum Borough Council, this report focuses on the heritage of the existing building and the impact of the proposed development

1.2 *Planning Background*

This assessment has been required under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in order to inform development proposals.

1.3 *The Site*

Location

No. 34 Alexandra Road is located in the town and civil parish of Hemel Hempstead, and the administrative district of Dacorum Borough Council. It is centred at NGR TL05645 07522 (Fig. 1).

Description

The site is on the southwest side of Alexandra Road. No. 34, also known as The Red House, is a two-storey, red brick, detached house, currently in use as a bed and breakfast. Flanking the building on either side are large blocks of flats. To the rear is the car park for another apartment block (Fig. 2).

Geology & Topography

The proposed development site is on the east side of Gade River valley, at approximately 100m AOD. The bedrock geology consists of sedimentary deposits of chalk, identified as Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation or Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

Proposed Development

The proposed development calls for the replacement of the existing structure with a three-storey block of flats (Figs. 3 and 4).



Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

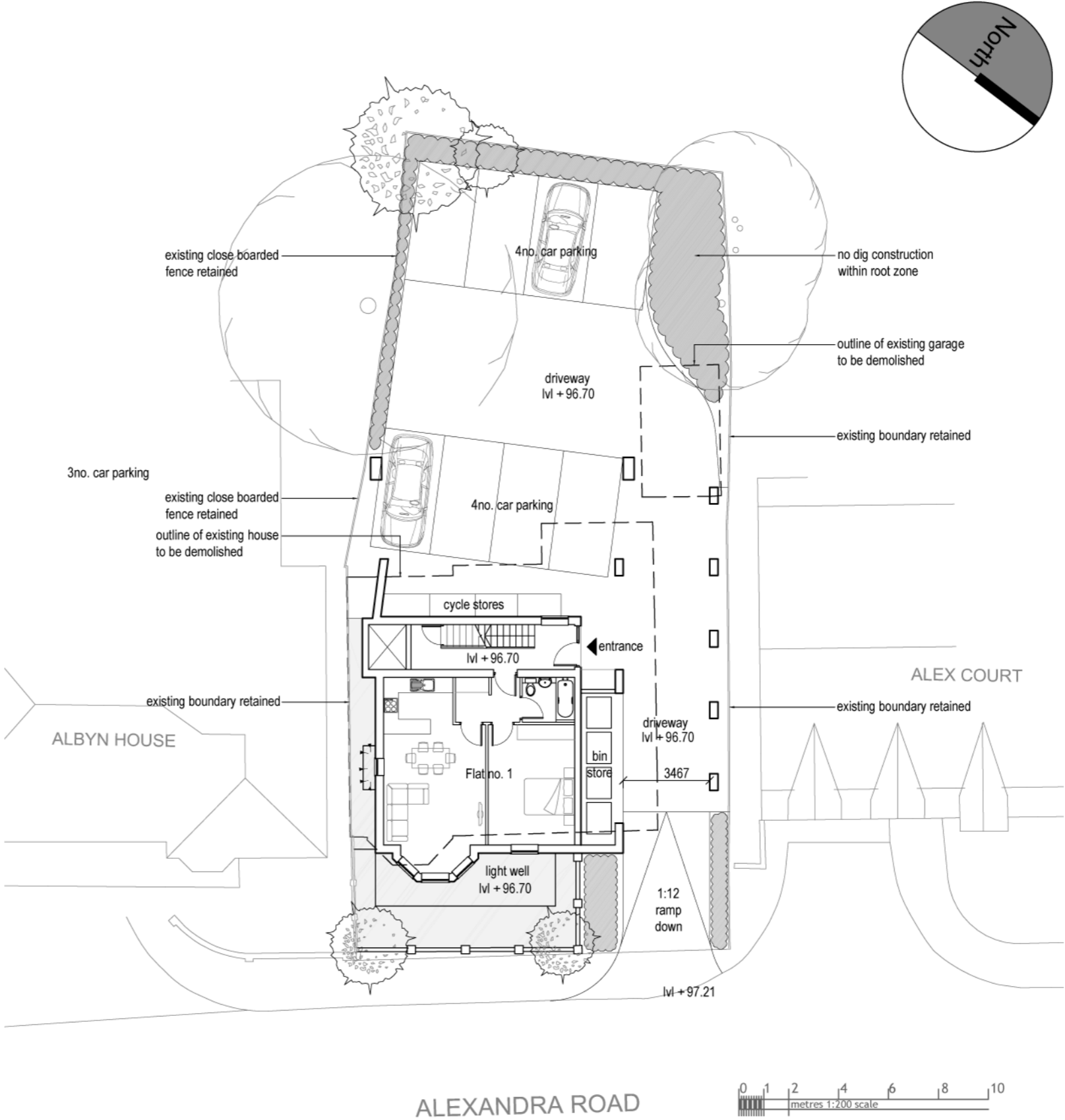


Figure 3: Proposed development plan (scale as shown)



Figure 4: Proposed development, front elevation (scale as shown)



2 Aims & Methods

- 2.1 This Heritage Asset Assessment has been prepared in order to comply with Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), whereby the significance and setting of the heritage asset(s) and the potential impacts of the proposed development are set out in order to inform the Planning Application.

This requires the collation of existing information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered (CIfA 2014).

- 2.2 The assessment was carried out according to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (CIfA 2014).

- 2.3 The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the assessment:

Archaeological Databases

The principal archaeological database to the known archaeology of an area is the Historic Environment Record prepared largely on a county basis and available in limited form on the website Heritage Gateway.

Historic Documents

Documentary research is essential to assess the history of a site, its context and significance. The principal source consulted was the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS), Hertford.

Cartographic & Pictorial Documents

Old maps and illustrations provide additional and often unique information to enhance the study of a site and its context. The principal sources consulted were the Ordnance Survey maps held at HALS.

Air Photographs

Aerial photographs can be extremely informative with regard the layout and use of a particular site and its development over time. It can also provide further contextual information which can allow a better understanding of the heritage asset and its significance.

Secondary & Statutory Sources

The principal sources consulted were the Hemel Hempstead Extensive Urban Survey (Hunns 2000) and the Victoria County History (Page 1908).

2.4 **Survey**

As part of the assessment a survey of the site was undertaken on 26 October 2017, with the following aims:

- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.



3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The proposed development site is located just to the south of the historic core of Hemel Hempstead. The settlement appears to have its origins in the medieval period, although nearby Roman remains indicate that there was occupation in the area from an earlier period. There is a large body of evidence to suggest that hamlets and villa complexes dating to the Roman period were liberally scattered throughout the area. Prior to this there is evidence for prehistoric use of the landscape stretching to the Palaeolithic with finds of stone tools at quarries throughout Hemel Hempstead.

This section has been compiled with information from KDK's own library, the Heritage Gateway and other reliable internet sources.

3.2 ***Prehistoric*** (before 600BC)

Hemel Hempstead is located in the Gade valley, an environment exploited from the earliest period. Paleolithic flints have been found at various sites around Hemel Hempstead (e.g. HER 540, 1303 & 2276), particularly in Leverstock Green. Bronze Age finds and a Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age occupation (HER 584, 585 and 9203) are clustered to the east of the proposed site.

3.3 ***Iron Age*** (600BC - AD43)

During the Iron Age, the lands around Hemel Hempstead would have been part of the tribal holdings of the Catuvellauni, who had significant settlements at St. Albans and Wheathampstead. Several Iron Age coins have been discovered in the area and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS).

3.4 ***Roman*** (AD43 - c.450)

By the Roman period, clear evidence emerges of occupation in the vicinity of the proposed development, most importantly, Gadebridge Park Roman villa, a 2nd century winged corridor villa with 1st century timber antecedents (HER 88). The villa, Scheduled Ancient Monument 27881, is located north of the site. First excavated in the 1960s, the villa was occupied through the late 4th century. It possessed a bath house and a swimming pool, built in the early 4th century near the baths (<http://www.dacorumheritage.org.uk/article/discover-how-dacorums-largest-roman-villa-evolved/>).

The Gadebridge Park villa is just one of group of villas, settlements and industrial sites around Hemel Hempstead, including villas at Boxmoor (HER 72), Northchurch (HER 1859) and Gorhambury (HER 504); a significant metal working site at Cow Roast (HER 1874); plus the city of Verulamium (St. Albans) only 8km to the east.

Additional Roman material found in the area of the site include a hoard of late 1st century coins and a possible votive hoard of bronze coins and other objects, both associated with the Gadebridge villa (HER 518 and HER 1867).

3.5 ***Saxon*** (c.450 - 1066)

Whilst there is no archaeological evidence for the early or middle Saxon period activity in the study area, there are early references to the settlement in the documentary record. As early as c704, King Offa granted land in *Haemele* to the Bishop of London (Hunns 2000: 3). A stone coffin, discovered in 1808 in Hemel Hempstead churchyard, purportedly contained the remains of Offa (Page 1908). While this indicates that the area was part of the kingdom of



Mercia, it may have later become part of the Danelaw. Evidence for this comes from its location in the Dacorum hundred, Dacorum being Latin for 'of the Danes' (*ibid*: 3).

Prior to the Norman Conquest, the manor of *Hamelhamstede* was held by two brothers who were in the service of Earl Leofwine. The manor was assessed at 10 hides, with land for up to 30 ploughs and woodland for 1200 pigs; there were also 4 mills in the manor, although there is no mention of a priest, which may mean that there was no church in the manor at this time. The whole manor was valued at £25 (Williams & Martin 2002:379).

3.6 **Medieval** (1066 - 1500)

The medieval core of Hemel Hempstead was located just to the north of the proposed development site. The Norman church of St Mary's is on the west side of the High Street has 12th century origins (Hunns 2000: 5). In the 13th century, at least half of the manor of Hemel Hempstead was granted to the College of Bonhommes of Ashridge, founded in 1283 (Page 1905). The monastery was dissolved in 1539 and the manor passed into private hands (*ibid*). A new manor house was built, part of which survives as the 'Charter Tower', a Scheduled Ancient Monument located in Gadesbridge Park, approximately 260m northwest of the proposed development (List Number 1005260) (Hunns 2000:4).

3.7 **Post-medieval** (1500 - 1900)

Originally a fairly small agricultural settlement, Hemel Hempstead began to expand rapidly following the Dissolution. In 1593, Henry VIII granted a 'Bailiwick' charter to Hemel Hempstead. This gave the town borough status and permitted the townspeople to elect a bailiff annually. A weekly market and an annual fair were also granted at this time (Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516 online, Hunns 2000: 5). Oliver Cromwell granted a further three annual fairs to Hemel Hempstead in 1656, after a petition from the townspeople. These fairs were discontinued after the Restoration (Hunns 2000: 6).

The markets and courts made the town a magnet for economic activity in the area. Agricultural products from the surrounding countryside were brought to the markets and shops along the High Street (*ibid*: 6). Hemel Hempstead had important corn and cattle markets. Many local residents were involved in the straw plaiting industry.

In the 19th century, both the Grand Junction Canal (1804) and the railway (1837) came to Hemel Hempstead, but in both cases, they were located some distance from the town centre, over 2km south. A branch line linking Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden finally opened in 1877. This closed to passenger traffic in 1947 and is now a public footpath known as the Nickey Line (http://www.nickeyline.org/the_nickey_line/nickey_line_history/). The line passed to the southeast of the proposed development site and contributed to the development of this part of Hemel Hempstead, which is somewhat confusingly known as the 'New Town'. This first 'New Town' expansion occurred at the end of the 19th century and included Alexandra Road, which had previously been occupied by farmland and orchards.

3.8 **Modern** (1900 - present)

The more common use of the term New Town refers to post-World War II expansion, which began in 1947 and was designed to provide homes to those displaced by the destruction wrought on many parts of London during the war. Hemel Hempstead grew rapidly in the second half of the 20th century. The town centre moved south to the Marlowes, a pedestrianised shopping district to the south and west of the proposed development.



3.4 Cartographic Evidence

On the 1843 Tithe map of Hemel Hempstead, which predates the initial 'New Town' expansion of the late 19th century, the proposed development site is located in an area of agricultural fields, orchards and gardens (Fig. 5). It is plot 971, described in the Tithe Award as Garden Field, occupied by William Smith, a farmer who leased or owned a number of fields in this area (plots 967, 970, 971, 973, 974, 1143 and 1165, at a minimum). Plot 971 belonged to Jane Field (1785-1872), a widow who was a substantial landowner.

By 1877, when the first edition Ordnance Survey map appeared, Alexandra Road had been laid out as far as Broad Street, but development was still limited to the northern end of the new road (Fig. 6). Over the next 10 years, however, there was increasing development along the length of Alexandra Road. The Congregational Church, originally built in 1879, was replaced with the current structure in 1890 (Hunns 2000: 13). No. 34 Alexandra Road first appears on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map, with a long garden extending southwest to the rear (Fig. 7).

In 1906, The Red House (No. 34) on Alexandra Road was occupied by Edgar Needham, publisher of the *Hertfordshire, Hemel Hempstead Gazette*, which had offices at No. 3 Alexandra Road (Kelly's 1906: 115). Mr. Needham occupied the house for a number of years, although in 1911 the property belonged to the estate of Russell Steele, a local doctor who had recently died (IR2 34/1).

After the initial period of growth at the end of the 19th century, there was a long period when very little development took place on Alexandra Road. The 1925 Ordnance Survey map still shows an open plot to the north of No. 34 (Fig. 8). It is not until the 1947 Ordnance Survey map that this gap is filled (Fig. 9).

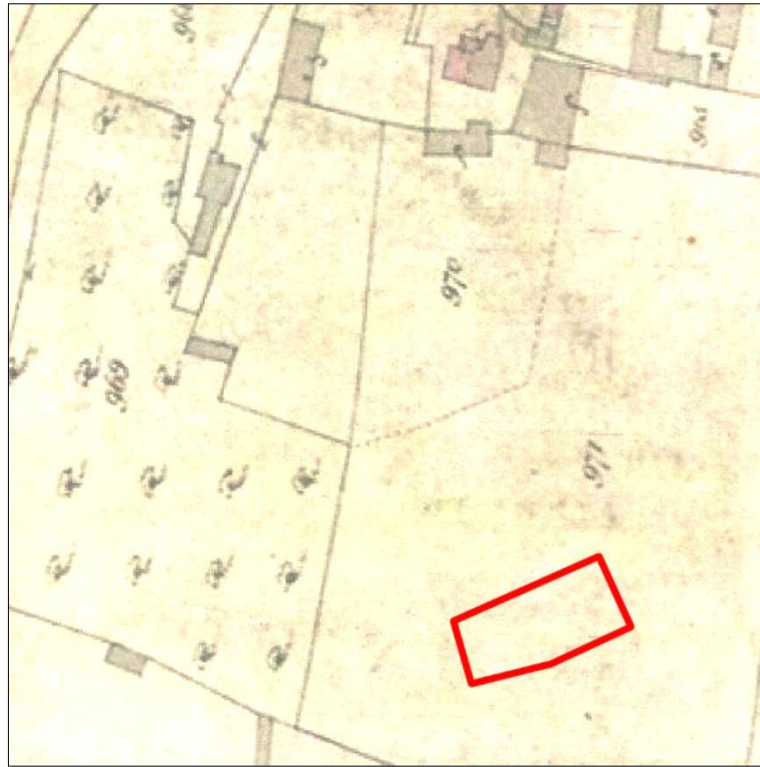


Figure 5: Detail of 1843 tithe map (scale 1:1500)



Figure 6: Detail of 1877 First Edition Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:1500)

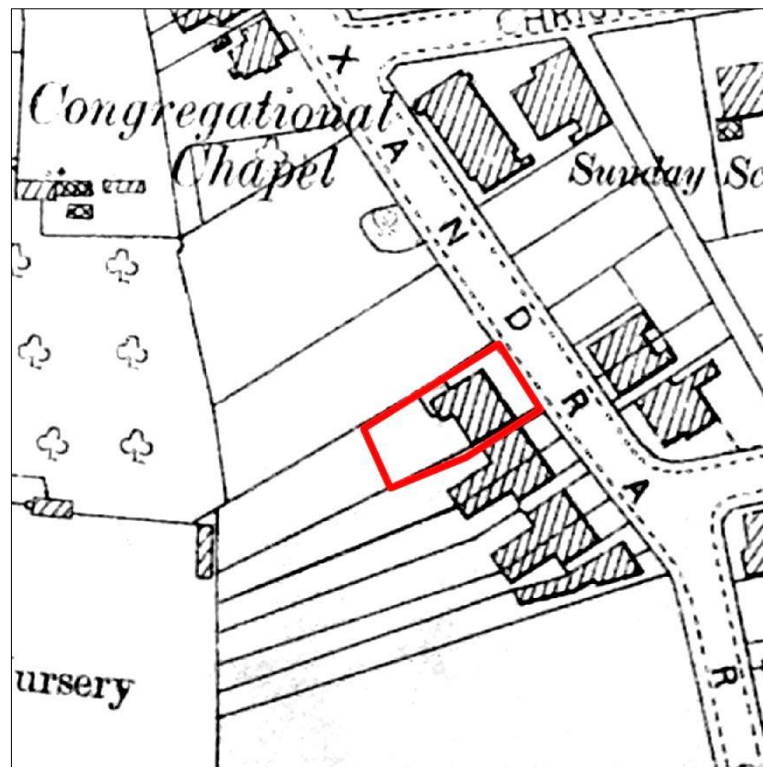


Figure 7: Detail of 1898 Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:1500)



Figure 8: Detail of 1925 Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:1500)

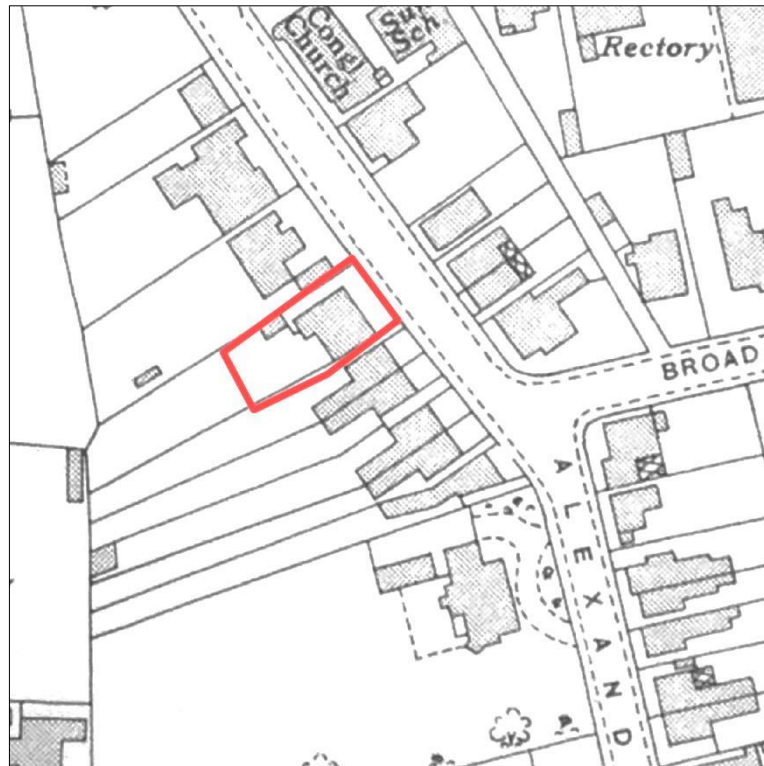


Figure 9: Detail of 1947 Ordnance Survey map (scale 1:1500)



4 Survey

4.1 *Extent, Access and Present Use*

No. 34 Alexandra Road is a red brick, detached dwelling house located on the southwest side of Alexandra Road, in the centre of Hemel Hempstead. Also known as The Red House, it was built at the end of the 19th century during an early phase of development in what was then the Hemel Hempstead 'New Town'.

4.2 *Buildings*

The building is a two-storey structure with a prominent Dutch gable facing Alexandra Road (Plate 1). The steeply sloping roof is red clay tile and there are large chimneys at the south end and in the northeast corner. A single-storey, hip-roofed addition extends off the north side of the building, facing the drive, which ends in a small, flat-roofed, brick garage (Plate 2). The rear opens onto a small garden (Plate 3), about a meter below the grade of the house and sloping toward the west. There are French doors opening from the lounge onto a paved patio (Plate 4).

The brickwork on the front façade features moulded detailing (Plate 5). A number of the windows are decorative and appear to be original, including the windows in the ground floor bay of the gable. The transom above the entry is also an original feature (Plate 6).

The interior of the house has been substantially modified for its current use as a bed and breakfast and retains few original details. The staircase, with stained glass windows on the landing, may be original (Plate 7) and the tiled floor of the entry is an older survival (Plate 8).

No. 34 Alexandra Road is flanked on both sides by large, multi-storey apartment blocks (Plates 9 and 10).



Plate 1: Front façade of No. 34 Alexandra Road, facing SW



Plate 2: North facing elevation, facing W



Plate 3: Rear garden, facing SW



Plate 4: Rear elevation, facing SE



Plate 5: Detail of brickwork on front façade, facing SW



Plate 6: Front door, facing NW



Plate 7: Interior stair and stained glass window (facing N)



Plate 8: Tiles in front entry



Plate 9: No. 34 Alexandra Road, flanked by neighbouring apartment blocks, facing NW



Plate 10: No. 34 Alexandra Road, facing W

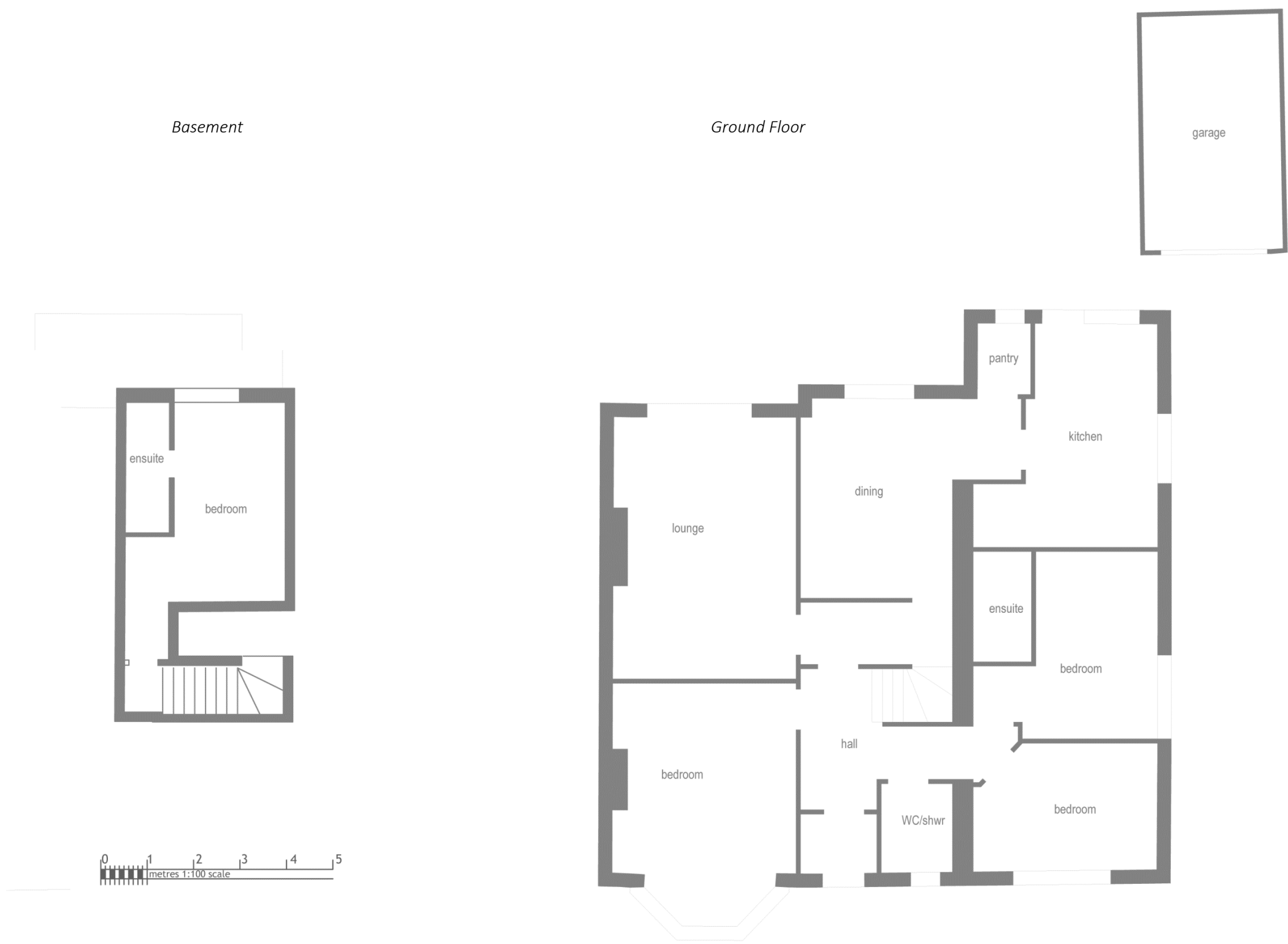


Figure 10: Existing basement and ground floor plans (scale as shown: 1:100 @ A3)



Figure 11: Existing first and second floor plans (scale as shown: 1:100@A3)



Figure 12: Existing front elevation (scale as shown: 1:100@A3)



Figure 13: Existing side (north) elevation (scale as shown: 1:100@A3)



Figure 14: Existing rear (west) elevation (scale as shown: 1:100@A3)

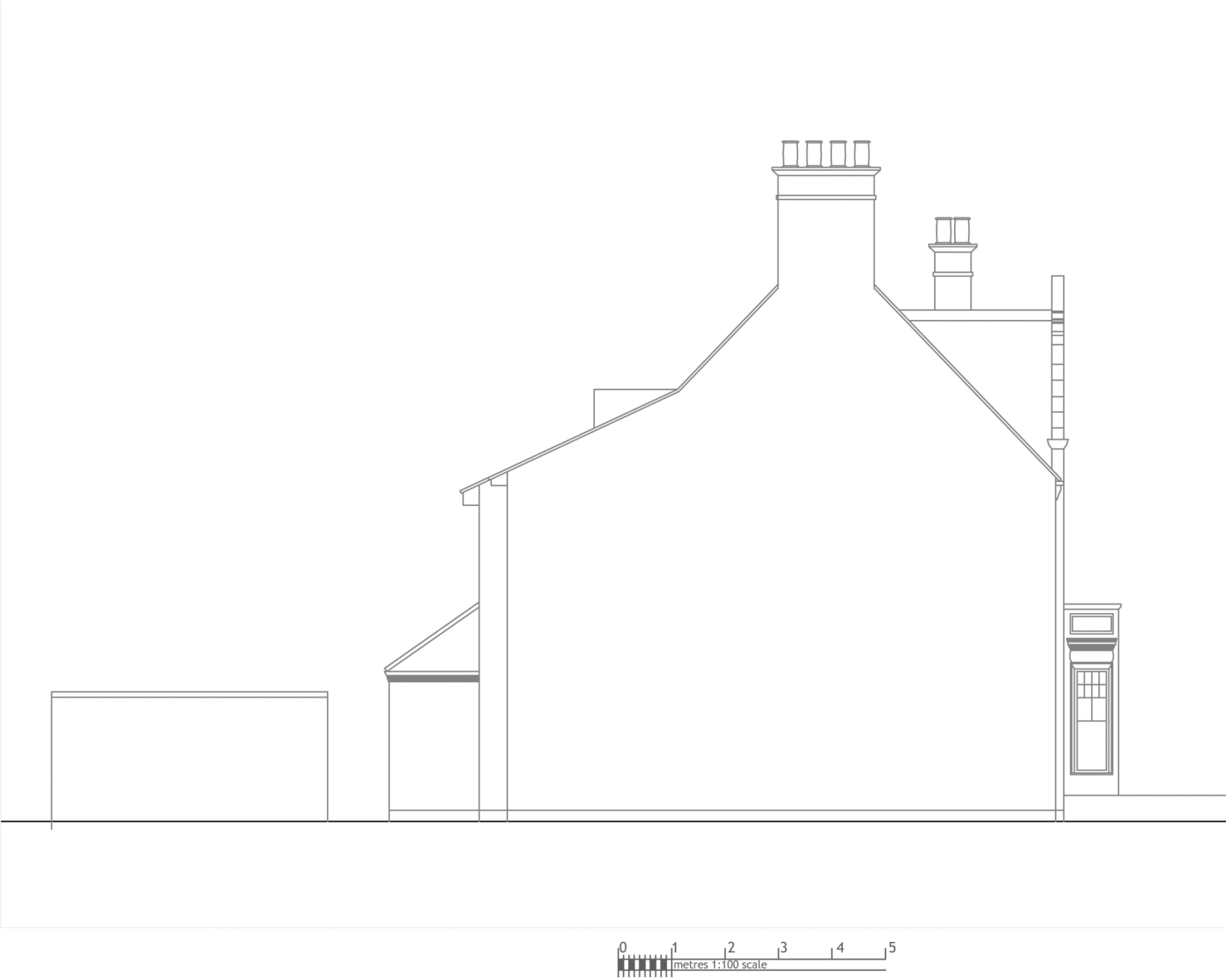


Figure 15: Existing side (south) elevation (scale as shown: 1:100@A3)



- MATERIALS:
- Walls: Orange face-brick
 - Roof: Grey clay roof tiles with terracotta ridges, dark uPVC bargeboards to gable ends
 - Windows: White uPVC with stone cill & splayed brick arch with stone keystone
 - Guttering: black uPVC
 - Ornamental work: Terracotta Panels to match existing



Figure 16: Proposed front and side elevations (scale as shown)



Figure 17: Proposed side and rear elevations (scale as shown)

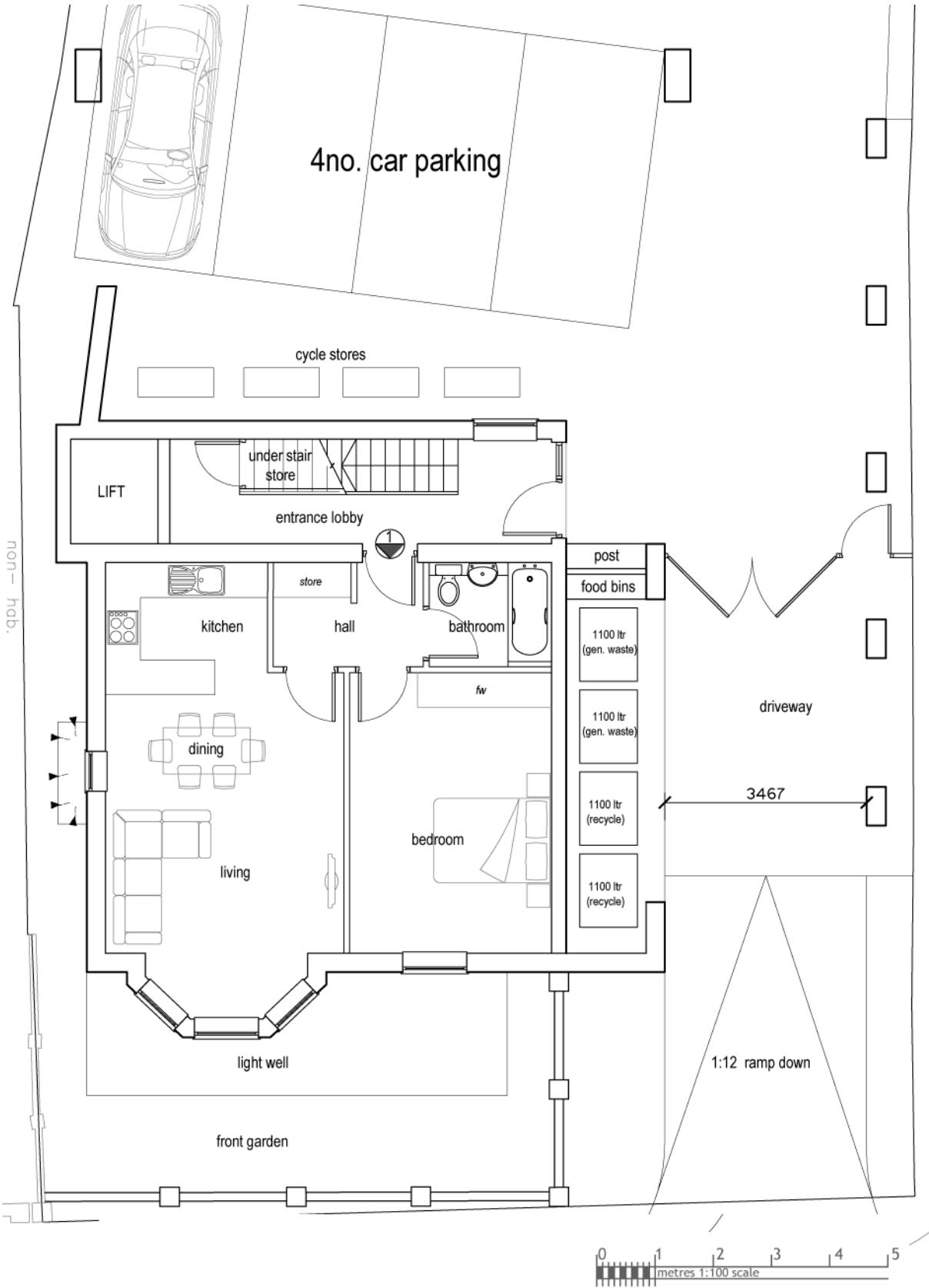


Figure 18: Proposed ground floor plan (scale as shown)

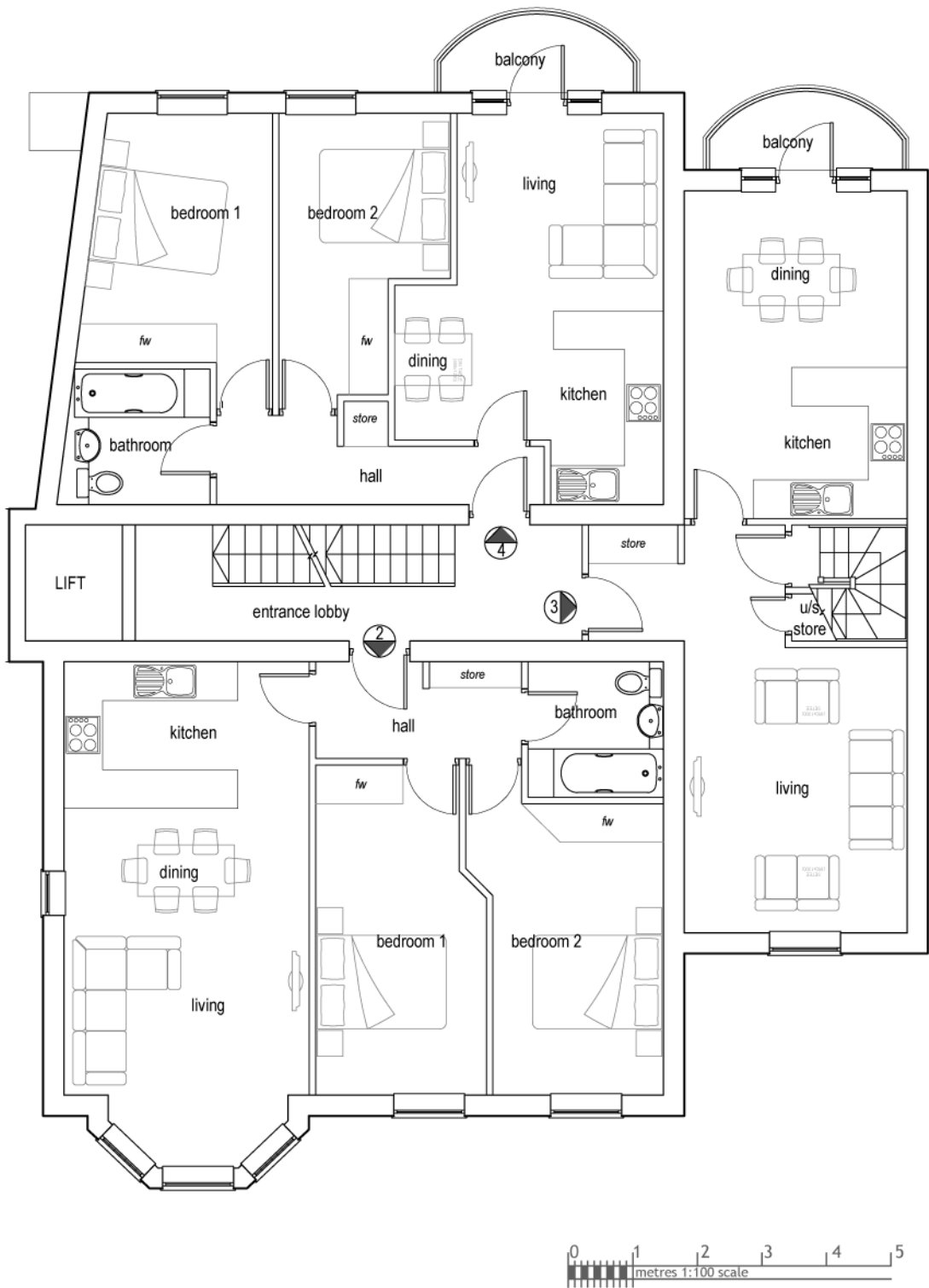


Figure 19: Proposed first floor plan

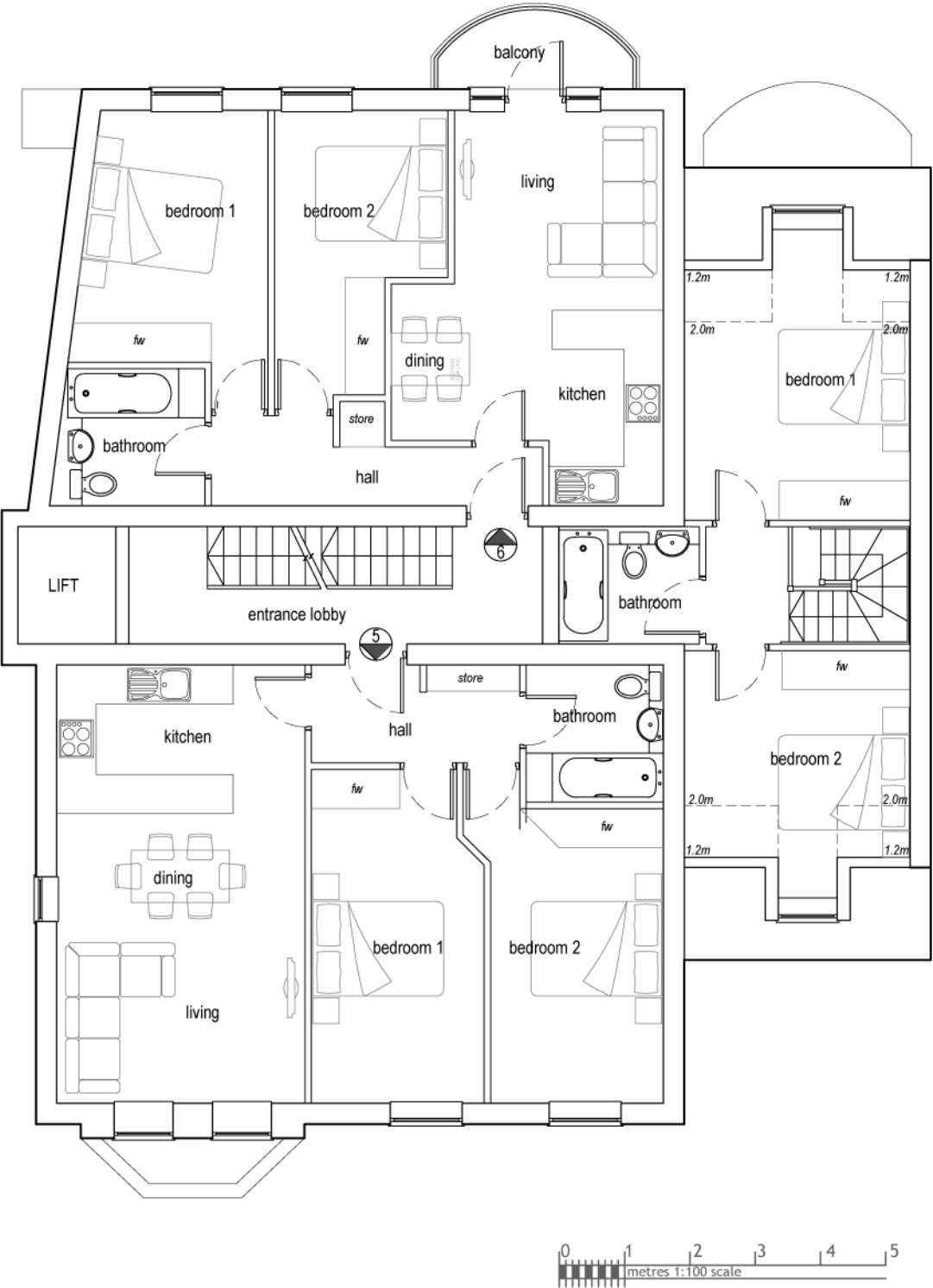


Figure 20: Proposed second floor plan (scale as shown)

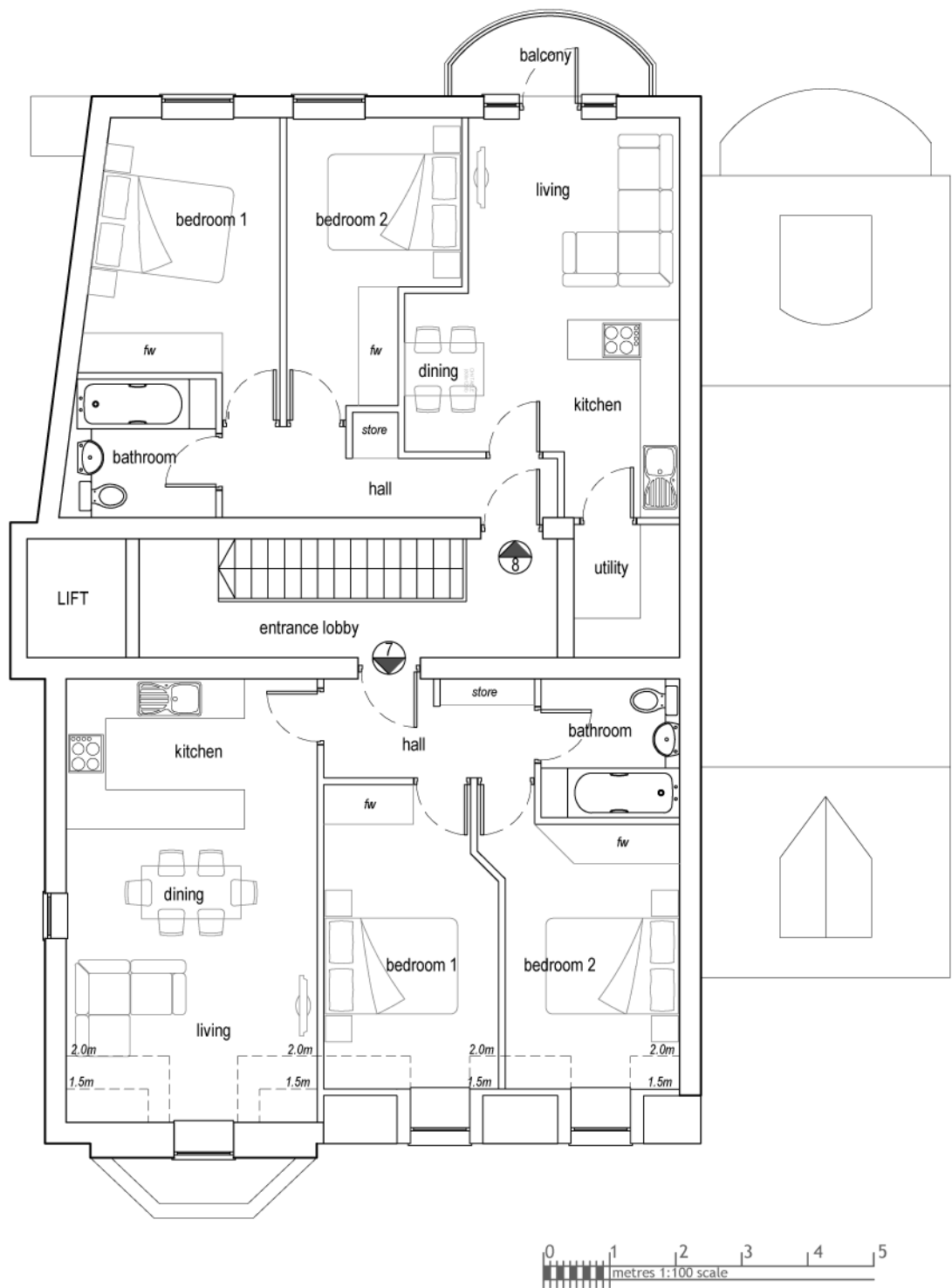


Figure 21: Proposed third floor plan (scale as shown)

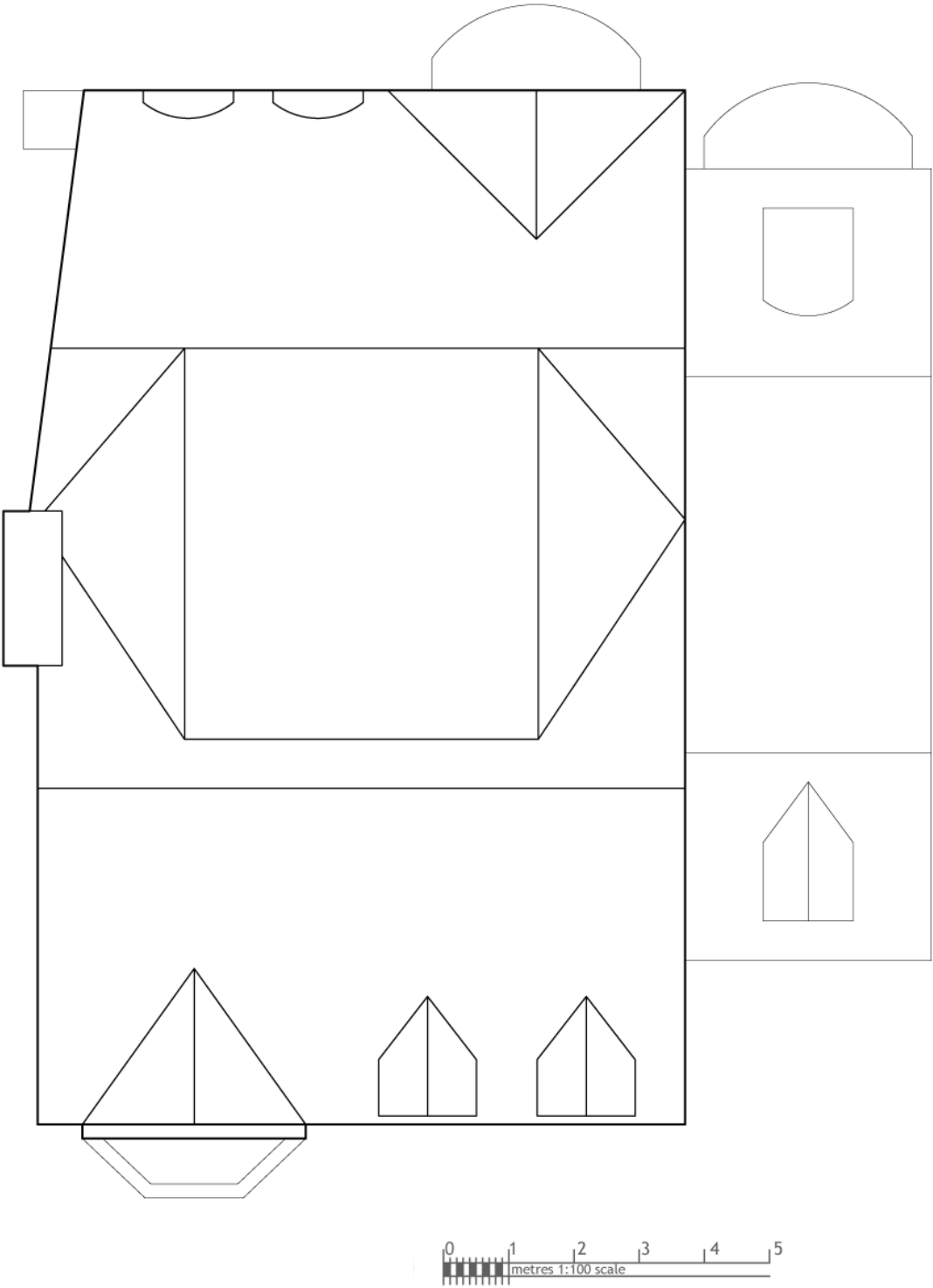


Figure 22: Proposed roof plan (scale as shown)



5 Assessment of Heritage Potential

5.1 *Heritage Assets, their Significance and Setting*

Since its beginnings, the town of Hemel Hempstead has experienced cycles of rapid growth and relative stability. It was a small agricultural settlement throughout the medieval period, when it was controlled by the College of Bonhommes in Ashridge. Following the Dissolution, the new markets granted by Henry VIII transformed the little village into a thriving trading centre. At the end of the 19th century, the arrival of the Grand Junction Canal and the railway encouraged the expansion of the town toward the south and west. The biggest change came in the mid-20th century, when the post-World War II 'New Town' movement caused exponential growth in size and population.

No. 34 Alexandra Road was built during the late 19th century period of expansion, as the population moved away from the High Street, into what was then considered the 'New Town'. The building was clearly designed for occupation by a prosperous family. Unfortunately, the building has suffered through the years. Most interior details have been removed, with the possible exception of the staircase at the centre of the building. All of the internal spaces have been reconfigured for modern use. Whilst the building was an attractive example of late Victorian domestic architecture, it is now quite run down, with some cracks and other damage to the brickwork and decaying window frames.

In addition, No. 34 Alexandra Road was originally one of a row of detached and semi-detached buildings of approximately similar size. Those have been demolished and it is now sandwiched between and completely overshadowed by two large blocks of flats. The dominance of these residential blocks is such that the back garden is virtually unusable.

5.2 *Potential Impact of the Proposed Development*

Whilst the proposed development calls for the demolition of the existing structure, the overall impact is neutral. This is due to the present condition of the structure and the presence of the large neighbouring apartment blocks. In a more salubrious setting, No. 34 Alexandra Road would make a positive contribution, but unfortunately it cannot compete with the flanking buildings.

5.3 *Minimising Possible Negative Impacts*

The design of the proposed development plan takes its inspiration from the present building, incorporating details into a new structure that will hold its own in the presence of its domineering neighbours. In particular, the Dutch gable, which is such a prominent feature of the existing structure, is reproduced on the new building. The steeply sloped roof and chimney also refer to elements of the existing building. By bringing these features into a modern building with height and mass that match the neighbours, this design would enhance the current setting.



6 Conclusions

No. 34 Alexandra Road, or the Red House, as it is known, is a late Victorian, detached house, located in the original 'New Town' section of Hemel Hempstead. A large house, it was built to house a middle-class family and their servants. It is now used as a bed and breakfast, with the interior remodelled into multiple bedrooms. Modern development on the surrounding properties as well as the loss of architectural detailing and integrity to the interior of the building detracts considerably from the heritage value of the site. The proposal by its virtues of height, mass, bulk and form would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The overall design would help soften the transition between the harshness of the unsympathetic modern buildings to either side and will thereby enhance the overall setting.



7 Acknowledgements

KDK Archaeology is grateful to William Cleeve for commissioning this report. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies for their assistance in the historic research.

The fieldwork was carried out by Ellen Shlasko PhD. The report was written by Ellen Shlasko and edited by Karin Kaye MA MCIfA.



8 References

Standards & Specifications

CIfA 2014 *Code of Conduct*. Reading: Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

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Hemel Hempstead Conservation Area: <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/hemel-hempstead-conservation-area-report.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Nickey Line: http://www.nickeyline.org/the_nickey_line/nickey_line_history/

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Page, W. 1908 'Parishes: Hemel Hempstead', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, pp. 215-230. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol2/pp215-230> [accessed 2 November 2017].



9 Documentary Sources

Date	Reference	Description
1843	DSA4-48-1	Tithe award
1911	IR2 34/1	Inland Revenue land valuation
1918	ER	Electoral register

10 Cartographic Sources

The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:

Date	Reference	Description
1843	DSA4-48-2	Tithe map
1877	XXXIII.8	First edition Ordnance Survey
1898	XXXIII.8	Ordnance Survey
1925	XXXIII.8	Ordnance Survey
1947	XXXIII.8	Ordnance Survey